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# Economic and Social Council

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**Commission on the Status of Women**
**Forty-ninth session**
28 February-11 March 2005
Item 3 (c) (ii) of the provisional agenda*
**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls**

## Statement presented by the International Federation of Social Workers, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-23005 (E) 040305

## Statement

The profession of social work seeks to address human rights issues such as poverty and education which directly affect the advancement of women and girls, by promoting social change, problem solving in relationships, and the enhancement of well-being.[1] IFSW recognizes that poverty is a critical issue affecting women. Women, therefore, are in need of improved economic prospects that ensure financial independence and security.

Education is a crucial intervention to ameliorating the poverty experienced by women. It is also an investment that is made in the society as a whole. A strong correlation exists between the education of women and an improved chance of survival for them and their children. Women who are educated tend to have access to greater employment opportunities that enhance their quality of life. IFSW supports the full participation of women in all educational processes as a way to advance the economic well-being of all people.

In conclusion, we strongly urge all non-governmental and governmental stakeholders:

- To develop feasible programs of economic and social support which increase the opportunities available to women.
- To eliminate the discrimination of women in the areas of earnings, employment, access to credit and employment-related public and private social benefit systems.[2]
- To eradicate gender-biased schooling and encourage women and girls to participate fully in educational systems.
- To advocate for the benefits education affords women by increasing public awareness through the use of governmental, community and media campaigns.

[1] http://www.ifsw.org/Publications/4.6e.pub.html
[2] http://www.ifsw.org/Publications/4.6.5.9.pub.html

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**Commission on the Status of Women**
**Forty-ninth session**
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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern: and further actions and initiatives: current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls**

## Statement presented by International Network of Liberal Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-23559 (E) 070305

## Statement

The activities of the INLW are inspired on the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. INLW performs these principles which are the basis of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The INLW's main objectives are developing the awareness of women concerning their rights and political, economic, social and cultural responsibilities; reinforcing the relationships and the exchange among women from all over the world, and promoting the application of the Human Rights Declaration.

In the forty-ninth session of the Commission of the United Nations on the Status of Women (CSW), which deals with the review of the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", and facing the challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, the INLW wants to express its concern about the lack of real effectiveness of the institutional mechanisms chosen by governments to deal with the advancement of women. At the same time, the INLW wants to express that there is the need to implement the Beijing Platform for Action in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

NECESSARY INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS AND REFORMS FOR THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT

**Present situation**

Since the Beijing Conference, institutional mechanisms have been created to help governments to provide equal opportunities for men and women. Social perception in favor of equal opportunities for men and women has increased, as has awareness of the need to implement specific policies to integrate women from the gender perspective.

**Obstacles and barriers**

In some countries, there is not an appropriate distribution of human and economic resources. In some areas, there is poor comprehension of the political significance of equal opportunities for men and women concerning topics such as the participation of women in democracy and women's human rights and, consequently, there is a lack of political will, as well as of lawful means to establish efficient implementation. A large number of countries have no systems of assessment or indicators concerning policies of equal opportunities for women and men.

Therefore it is essential to:

- Propose a political agenda by governments, public institutions and political parties to set up an **Equality Legislation** and to create independent bodies devoted to guarantee the efficient implementation and accomplishment of this legislation.

- Strengthen all the institutional mechanisms, providing them with the necessary human resources and adequate budgets to guarantee their presence in the highest levels of all governmental departments and all other decision-making bodies, so that the gender perspective is integrated throughout all governmental policies.

- Guarantee that the main responsibility concerning equal opportunities for men and women is carried by governments. This guarantee must necessarily have continuity.

- Promote plans of positive action and equal opportunities for men and women in the private and public sector, as well as in the business, trade union and academic fields.

- Establish indicators to evaluate and promote the implementation of equality policies in order to have control of this implementation.

- Incorporate analysis of the gender perspective in order to allocate the necessary budgets to carry out effective gender policies.

- The responsible governmental bodies have to meet on a regular basis in order to exchange impressions and experiences and, based on best practices, reach conclusions, analyze and spread out the information at the highest levels of decision-making, and use it in basic training programs.

- Promote the participation of young women in NGOs and other social, economic, academic and media institutions in order to guarantee their continuity.

- Provide technical and economic support to public and private institutions devoted to the organization, research and assessment of activities which have as a main objective the achievement of equality.

- Provide civil society access to statistics and information concerning the gender perspective.

- Establish legislative rules in order to eliminate stereotypes and spread out positive images of relationships between men and women, and between young girls and young boys in the media.

- Include women who have experienced harassment in armed conflict situations and experts in peace-building and the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and in post-conflict peace-building at all decision-making levels.

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**Commission on the Status of Women**
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Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"**

## Statement presented by Ittijah — Union of Arab Community-based Associations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-24244 (E) 280205

## Statement

Palestinian Women Citizens of Israel, in the Israeli Economy1

A growth of 4% has recently been measured in the Israeli economy. Still, the fruits of growth have seen unequal distribution.2 The current trend is towards a growing inequality between high-income and middle- and lower-income households. This trend is entrenched due to the segmentation of the Israeli society into many different ethnic and socio-cultural groups, visible among Palestinian citizens of Israel, and mostly among women.3

As for 2003, Palestinian citizens of Israel comprised 19.3% of the whole population, while Palestinian women comprised about half of the Palestinian population living in Israel.4 They face discrimination on three levels: for being women, for being part of a patriarchal male-dominated society and for being part of an indigenous ethnic minority living in Israel, thus making them the most disadvantaged community living in Israel.

Since October 2000 and the beginning of the second Intifada (the Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation), women as well as men have been frequently affected by the conflict either directly or indirectly. During 2002-2003, forms of state support were affected by a series of budget cutbacks leading to a downturn in the nation's economy. All sectors of the population were affected; however, poor families, and Palestinian women in particular, suffered the most.5

In the past few years, the government of Israel carried out a complete change in its social policy which negatively contributed to the economic stability.6 Immediate cutbacks were aimed at the working-age population, distorted the social security net of the country and harmed achievements accomplished over many years.7 These economic measures were initiated in response to the reduction of economic activity, which was the outcome of two factors: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the world recession.8 While other parts of the world began to evince economic growth, the recession in Israel only deepened. The conflict became the dominant factor in the Israeli recession.9 The Government was able to allocate large budgets to the defense for preserving the occupation, defending and building new settlements and expanding existing ones. It also invested billions in a wall, whose cost is far higher than originally planned, after confiscating large portions of Palestinian territory.10

The budget proposal for fiscal year 2005, which is currently in an approving process in the Israeli Parliament, is a direct continuation of the destructive fiscal policies that are leading more families to poverty, with Palestinian women being the group most affected.

Women as well as men have been adversely affected, differently though, as a result of the armed conflict, as recognized in UN Security Council resolution 1325, as well as in the S.C. Study from October 2002 regarding the impacts of armed conflict on women. One of the major impacts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on women in Israel was strengthening the feminization of poverty, mostly visible in employment and the economy.

NII's recent report11 reveals hard data regarding the incidence of poverty. A Palestinian family is three times more likely to be poor than a Jewish family - 55.6% of Arabs live below the poverty line, compared with 30.8% among Jews.12 Moreover, senior officials in the Bank of Israel stated recently that the poverty rate is 30% higher than NII reported.

In addition, the data of 2003 reveals that the rate of Arab children who live below the poverty line is growing to 57.5% vis-à-vis 30.8% of Jewish Children.

As such, poverty in Israel has been regarded only as an economic issue related to development. This statement will however emphasise that the phenomenon of poverty is a security problem, as well as a development issue, as illustrated in the Report of the Secretary General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, "A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility."

Two main factors influence the extent of poverty among Arabs in Israel: large families and low income, which is a function of high unemployment rates; low wages; and a high proportion of single-breadwinner families due in part to the low participation of Arab women in the labor force.13

Inequality between Palestinians and Jews in employment can be illustrated through several spheres: As for 2002, the rate of participation in the workforce among Palestinians in Israel aged 15 and over, was 39% compared with 57% among Jews.14 However, among Palestinian women, only 17.1% participated in the workforce compared to 54% among Jewish women.15 The participation of Palestinian Bedouin women (mostly live in the south) is even far lower, comprising 6% of the workforce!16 The gap in working rates among Jewish and Palestinian men leaves many families without any breadwinner, thus losing social benefits,17 preserving gender and ethnic inequality.

Disparities in appointments to public posts: as for 2002 Palestinians comprised only 6.1% of the employees in Israel,18 whereas they comprise 19.3% of the whole population. Moreover, of all Palestinian employees in public posts, Palestinian women comprised only 38.8%, while the total rate of women in the public posts comprised 62.4%.19

Disparities in employment income: Average family income of Palestinians in Israel is 57% of the average family income of Jews, which in addition to a lower rate of income among women (69% of men's average income) leads to the fact that only 3% of Palestinian households are in the top one fifth of households nationally, compared with 22% of Jewish households.20

Unemployment gap between Jews and Palestinians in Israel: Since 1996, the overall unemployment rate in Israel has been rising steadily. This trend peaked during the recession of 2001-2003 but the increase among Palestinians has been steeper, with a growing disparity between the rate for Arabs and the rate for Jews.21

Unequal access to employment and access to additional jobs: Industrial zones situated in Arab localities compose a resource of employment for Arabs, both men and women, in which they create additional jobs. However, as for 2003, only 3.2% of the industrial zones in local municipalities and under Israel's supervision are located in Arab localities.22

Lack of mobility and public transportation in Arab villages is another component in preventing full and equal participation of Arab women in the workforce in addition to violating their basic right of providing equal and free access to movement.

Lack of service and facilities such as day-care centers and facilities: As for 2003, out of 1,700 day-care facilities, only 36 were located in Arab communities - comprising only 2% of day-care centers, while Palestinian children comprise 30% of all children in Israel.23

A low rate in business enterprises is common in the Arab sector in Israel, especially among women who are mostly dependent on family resources and income. Palestinian women turn to local markets and their ability to develop business enterprises is very low.24

Instead of creating equal access to employment and increasing the participation of Palestinians in the work force, the Government has, inter alia, delayed planning processes; prevented designating budgets to establish industrial zones and new neighborhoods and did not encourage accessibility to transportation.25

The above state of affairs is due to unequal treatment and implementation of the Israeli domestic legal system; violation of international human rights law, which Israel has signed and ratified and which calls for member states to ensure equal access and participation of women in employment and economy, such as CEDAW, ICESCR, ICCPR; and violation of resolution 1325, which calls for member states to fully implement international human rights law for women and girls during and after conflicts.

Indeed, the debate on gender issues is clearly growing in Israel, yet very little of it is visible in practice and gender mainstreaming is almost unheard of 26. No affirmative action or special measures are being conducted and taken to promote Palestinian women's equal access to employment, equal representation and appointments in public posts and larger role in the Israeli economy.

Social and cultural factors create a huge weight in excluding and restricting Palestinian women from the economic sphere. However, Articles 2(f) and 5(a) of CEDAW call for abolishing and modifying such patterns and eliminating all practices based on stereotyped roles for men and women.

In conclusion, the goal of advancing and empowering women as stated in Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other outcome documents are not being fulfilled or referred to, hence we call on the Commission to instruct the Government of Israel, to implement its international obligations towards ensuring equality, especially economic equality, for Palestinian women. In addition, the phenomenon of poverty in Israel, affecting mostly Palestinian women, should be discussed during the U.N. special summit in September 2005, as has been recommended by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility."

1 This statement refers only to Palestinian citizens of Israel living inside Israel, unless stated otherwise.
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Center . Information on Equality and Social Justice in Israel, May 2001. Available at:
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3 Id.
4 The Arab Population in Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, available at:
http://www.cbs.gov.il/hodaot2004/01
5 The Sikkuy Report 2003-2004, Monitoring Civic Equality Between Arab and Jewish Citizens of Israel, November 2004, published by Sikkuy . The Association for the Advancement of Civil Equality, available at:
http://www.sikkuy.org.il/english/report%202004.pdf
6Leah achdout, Annual survey 2002-2003, National Insurance Institute, April 2004, available at:
http://www.btl.gov.il/English/pirsumim/annual_survey/skira_20023.pdf
7Id.
8 Dr. Shlomo Swirski et-al, Two Years of Destructive Policies, Critique of the Budget Proposal for Israel for Fiscal 2004, from a Gender Perspective, Adva Center, available at:
http://www.adva.org/Budget2004GenderEnglish.htm
9 Id.
10 Id.
11 Poverty and Inequality in Income Division, National Insurance Institute, November 2004, available only In Hebrew at: http://www.btl.gov.il/pdf/oni2003.pdf
12 Id., supra n. 5.
13 Supra n. 5
14 Id.
15 Id.
16 Supra n. 4.
17 Supra n. 5
18 The Sikkuy Report 2002-2003, Monitoring Civic Equality Between Arab and Jewish Citizens of Israel, July 2003, available at:
http://www.sikkuy.org.il/2003/english03/en2003.html
19 Id.
20 Supra n. 5
21 Id.
22 Supra n. 18.
23 Id.
24 Ageta Nira Krauss, Women in Israel, Compendium of Data and Information, published by The Israel's Women Network, available at:
http://www.iwn.org.il/DataBookE.htm
25 Ameen Fares, State Budget and The Arab Citizens, A Socio-Economic Report 2004, Published in Hebrew by Mossawa Center . The Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens of Israel.
26 Supra n. 2

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**Commission on the Status of Women**
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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"**

## Statement presented by IPAS, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-24250 (E) 070305

## Statement

Ten years ago, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, nations adopted a Platform for Action that recognized the fundamental connection between human rights, reproductive rights, and sexual and reproductive health. According to the agreement, these rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so. Unfortunately, 120 million women who want to plan their families still do not have access to the means to do so. Many of these women, faced with an unwanted pregnancy, will resort to unsafe abortion.

Every year, close to 20 million women seek unsafe abortions; 68,000 of them die and 5 million more are temporarily or permanently disabled. It was recognized during the five-year review of the Platform for Action that unsafe abortions represent a grave public health problem as it is primarily the poorest and youngest who take the highest risk. In follow-up to the 1994 Cairo Programme of Action, nations were called on to ensure that women who have unwanted pregnancies should have ready access to reliable information and compassionate counselling. In circumstances where abortion is not against the law, such abortion should be safe. Further, nations where abortion is a crime were called on to consider reviewing laws containing punitive measures against women who have undergone illegal abortions.

Many members of the international community – governments, civil society organizations, and international agencies – have worked together to lay the foundation for more rapid progress in reducing the deaths and injuries caused by unsafe abortion. These include increased contraceptive usage and expanded post-abortion care programs, saving many women's lives. In addition, a number of countries have expanded legal indications for abortion, while technologies for induced abortions have also improved. We must also recognize the World Health Organization's released guidance for health systems on the provision of high-quality care for women who need induced abortions.

However, more needs to be done. In a clear violation of their rights to health and life, over 100 million women will experience the risks and trauma of an unsafe abortion during their lives unless they are enabled to avoid unwanted pregnancies. Many of these women are living in poverty or suffering from serious health conditions such as HIV/AIDS or malaria. Many are adolescents, survivors of sexual violence, refugees or displaced persons living in situations

characterized by violence and lack of access to adequate health services.

On this occasion as we review the Beijing Platform for Action, therefore, we call on all members of the international community – governments, civil society organizations, and international agencies – to join together in pursuing an active dialogue on abortion as a critical issue in women's reproductive health and rights and in supporting the actions required to translate the Beijing Platform for Action into reality.

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**Commission on the Status of Women**
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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls**

## Statement presented by International Federation for Family Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-24238 (E) 070305

## Statement

1. The condition of women has experienced marked improvement in education, health, economics, legal issues. However, the underlying challenge is to acknowledge and accept women for who they are and the unique contributions they can make in the family, society and the workplace with their specific feminine qualities. Women have an irreplaceable role in all aspects of family and public life as they are especially gifted to establish and maintain relationships and to care for others.

2. Home and family will always occupy a central place in the life of women. Household work, motherhood and full-time occupation in the education of children should be treated, valued and respected as professional work. Women should have the freedom to choose this lifestyle. It is in the family, the basic structure of society, where character is formed in its members. Men should respect the human dignity of women and society should develop conditions favoring work at home so that women are not compelled to work outside the home.

3. Men and women have equal dignity and responsibility as human persons. Therefore, women have a right to take an active, responsible part in all levels of public life, to be leaders. There are no specific tasks for women because what is specific is the way the work is done. By virtue of their special gifts, women can greatly enrich civil life. They are oriented to teamwork, the concrete, communication, time management, leadership. This is particularly clear in family and social legislation. Women bring to the professional world their personal dimension, assuring that human values will be respected when it comes to policies that affect family, economic and social life.

4. As the presence of women continues to increase in the labor force, policies should be established to make the workplace compatible with family life, without loss of productivity. Women in the workplace, out of necessity or special situations, often find themselves having to choose between home and work. Flexible work schedules and maternity leaves are some of the policies that could be implemented globally. Husbands, fathers and children should take their share of household work according to the characteristics of each particular family.

5. Strategy for the advancement and empowering of women is not for them to imitate the male role and try to become more like men, seeking power in an antagonistic way, or by ignoring male/female differences. The strategy is to acknowledge that both sexes have equal dignity and complement each other, and act accordingly. The recognition and respect for the differences between men and women, where each one brings their specific talents and gifts, will result in harmonious collaboration.

6. Lastly, as concluded in the XVIth International Family Congress (IFFD) in New York, 2004, "Policies should aim at fostering equal dignity between women and men within their families and bring about a full sharing of domestic and social responsibilities and employment opportunities, favoring a balance between external work and family responsibilities, especially among the female-headed families".

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## Statement submitted by Women's Environment and Development Organization, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-24849 (E) 070305

**Position paper for the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women: More actions, enough words!!! Women's rights are not negotiable!!!**

In 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 189 Governments adopted the Beijing Platform for Action, which identified goals for overcoming obstacles to the advancement of women in the world. In the Platform, Governments acknowledged that women's rights were central to development and peace, and that women's issues and global issues are one and the same. Women thus won a broad-based agenda for promoting and protecting their human rights worldwide, while establishing the principle of shared power and responsibility between women and men in all arenas.

Yet, despite some policy gains, 10 years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, women – especially poor women-- the world over continue to face many of the same critical issues that were addressed in Beijing. The neoliberal economic model and market-driven policies that promote unfair trade and increased privatization of public goods and services, the increasing power and lack of accountability of multinational corporations, the resurgence of many forms of fundamentalism, the escalation of military conflict, the persistence of violence against women around the globe, the increasing number of natural disasters and the escalating backlash against women's sexual and reproductive rights have created a stifling climate for progressive changes in women's lives. As global forces threaten all human rights and as global inequities grow, the challenges facing women, their families and communities are ever more complex.

Despite the weaknesses noted above, the United Nations remains the international institution in which we have the most hope, where every nation in the world has a voice and a vote, and where developing countries play a leadership role in setting and carrying out its agenda. The United Nations also provides most systematically and broadly for civil society participation and has unquestionably advanced the global agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Women are agents of change. We play an essential role in putting gender in the global policy agenda. We want to move forward rather than merely struggle to hold the line on prior gains.

The forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, devoted to the 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, provides an opportunity for Governments to look forward and to recommit themselves to achieving gender equality, development, human rights for **all** and peace.

The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) urges Governments at the forty-ninth session of the Commission to unequivocally reaffirm the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the International Conference on Population and Development and their full and accelerated implementation at the national level, in a brief political declaration.

WEDO also urges Governments and all other relevant actors including international financial institutions to include the following principles in their statements:

- Adopt a human rights approach to macroeconomic issues that promotes sustainable development linking economic growth to gender equality, social development and environmental protection and peace.

- Commit real resources at this meeting including the fulfilment of the internationally agreed 0.7 per cent target of the gross national product of developed countries for overall official development assistance, and put in place effective mechanisms for accelerated implementation of the commitments of the Platform for Action. Without political will and financial support, the Beijing Platform for Action will remain words on paper and the Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved.

- Recognize that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential to achieving the Millennium Declaration, **all** the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development.

- Take all measures at the national and global levels to ensure that gender equality is fully integrated, using the Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as frameworks, in the review of the Millennium Declaration in September 2005.

- Ensure civil society, including women's groups, meaningful participation at the Millennium Summit +5.

- Ensure equal and full participation of women in decision-making and power structures, particularly in macroeconomic institutions, environmental management and all peace and security processes.

- Adopt affirmative action measures including quotas to ensure gender balance at all levels of decision-making.